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American socialism, weighed and found...

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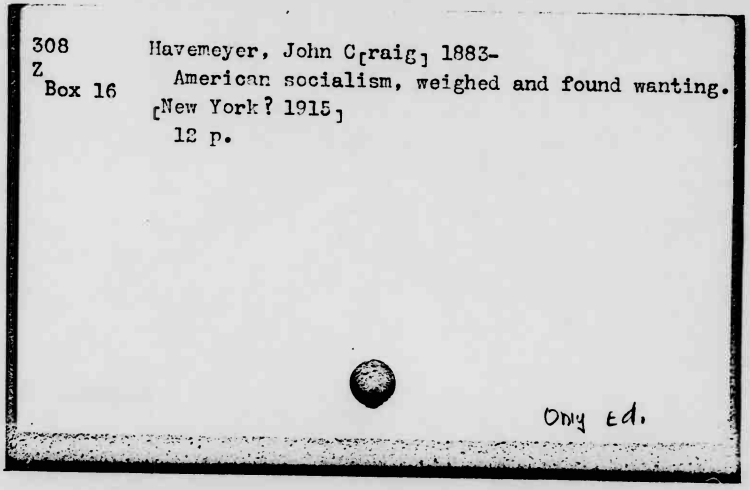

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American Socialism

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

BY

John C. Havemeyer

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Box 16

15 Nov 1913. MS.

American Socialism

I have received the following courteous request from the editor of "The American Socialist" of Chicago for an article stating: "Why are you not a Socialist?" or "Why are you opposed to Socialism?" and answered that I would comply with the request if a brief statement of the socialistic belief and proposed action should be forwarded to me. I received promptly a printed summary of the views adopted at the National Socialist Convention in 1912, which gave me the required information.

My leading objection to Socialism, as announced in the United States Convention of 1912, is its narrowness and failure to consider truth in its widest sense, and its views are therefore incomplete and impracticable. Indeed, a definition of Socialism seems to me: an effort of a certain number of people to have the rest of the world think and act according to their requirements, without considering whether their own judgment and conscience approves, and whether it meets their needs. I find that its great aim is to attack and destroy capital, and I think I may justly add that its methods are unfair and unreasonable.

We certainly cannot afford to avoid a careful consideration of the question, Who has made us and for what purpose? Surely we should have this knowledge, as it is needful for a successful life. We certainly are fearfully and wonderfully made. What is sight, hearing, taste, memory, sleep and mind or thought; and what is their intended and therefore right use? In the search for truth we should also perhaps realize that everything around us is made for a purpose and by an almighty power.

I am greatly surprised, and even shocked, that the name of God is not once mentioned in the literature sent to me as a summary of the work of the 1912 Socialist Convention. It seems incredible that intelligent men would assume that there can be success and right living without believing in God and keeping His commandments.

At a very early age I accepted the existence of God as a fact, and the Bible as a revelation of His will, which should, during my life, regulate my faith and practice. Seventy years have elapsed, and my early faith is fully justified and confirmed. I should like to know whether the Socialism expressed at the Convention in 1912 considers that the world was not made by God, and looking at its history since that time, there has not been failure and punishment or extinction if God has not been recognized and obeyed? Have we not even

lately, through the floods, tempests and whirlwinds which have wrought such destruction to houses, crops, lives and railroads, learned how absolute is our dependence upon Him? Is He not the author of pestilences and famine and other phenomena which destroy comfort and life? No man or woman can afford to be ignorant of the truth the Bible gives concerning God and His requirements.

There is the wonderful teaching that the first man and woman were made in the image and likeness of God, and were placed in the Garden and instructed as to God's will. They could obey or disobey. While they obeyed, God came into the Garden and communed with them, and, as it were, shared their life; but when they disobeyed, this communion ceased, for the spiritual likeness to God had left them, and Jeremiah's description applies to all men and women when he said: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jeremiah's description, or that given in the New Testament, applies to all men, which includes the people who participated in the Socialist Convention. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"— the glory which God desired to share with Adam and which Christ came to restore. Christ called this restoration a new birth, which alone would fit us to share God's existence and presence in the other world. When Christ was asked what is the great commandment in

the law, He replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "thy neighbor as thyself."

The welfare of the individual is the welfare of the nation, and no legislation of any convention will affect the welfare of the world if there is not obedience to God.

It should be remembered that religious truth is not opposed to, but is consistent with the highest common sense, and is not separate from, but represents what is reasonable and practical. It simply takes into account what is truth or fact in what relates to this world and the world to come. I have given a Bible quotation as to what is the natural condition of every man and woman in the world. How can this Bible assertion be denied or doubted?

In the Ten Commandments given from Mt. Sinai, intended primarily for the Israelites, and later for the whole world, there is a warning against worshipping idols made of various substances, including gold; and there is the command not to murder, steal or bear false witness. The necessity for these Commandments is due to the selfishness which characterizes individuals and nations. How clearly this is proved by the number of prisons in all the lands and the prisoners who occupy them. How indispensable is a police system among all nations to protect life and property and enforce law and order, and what an illus-

tration is the fact that a man named Mohammed born 570 A. D., nearly 1500 years ago, declared himself to be a prophet of God and has secured a following amounting, at the present time, to over 180,000,000 people; but the most convincing proof is the war now raging in Europe, in which the intelligent and educated nations are participating and killing each other by millions for worldly ends, to enlarge their territories and secure possession of what belongs to their neighbors, being inspired by the deceitful pretext that patriotism is a national duty which requires men to participate in killing as many of the people, and in destroying as much property as possible, of the nations opposed to them.

Hon. Elihu Root in an address while Secretary of State made the following statement regarding the spirit and purpose of the United States:

"We wish for no victories but those of peace; for no territory except our own; for no sovereignty except the sovereignty over ourselves. We deem the independence and equal rights of the smallest and weakest member of the family of nations entitled to as much respect as those of the greatest empire, and we deem the observance of that respect the chief guaranty of the weak against the oppression of the strong. We neither claim nor desire any rights or privileges or powers that we do not freely concede to every American republic. We wish to increase our prosperity, to extend our trade, to grow in wealth,

in wisdom, and in spirit, but our conception of the true way to accomplish this is not to pull down others and profit by their ruin, but to help all friends to a common prosperity and a common growth, that we may all become greater and stronger together."

Surely, Socialism is not the change the world needs; it is not designed for the real men and women who inhabit it. Every individual and nation needs to recognize and obey God, individually and nationally, and the great aim of a successful life must be to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness", and regard things seen as simply temporal, and things unseen as eternal.

Does not American Socialism practically ignore the very important fact that men differ widely in talent, ability, skill, tact, education, economy, morality, and in other respects? Can human affairs be regulated so that every man's position and influence should not be determined by what he is, and what he is able to do? We also learn from the Bible that it is the duty and privilege of every man and woman to be a co-worker with God. It therefore follows, that every one who fails to fulfill this duty hinders God's work in the world. We may take as an illustration, that all parents have the positive duty to bring up their children in the way they should go and when they are old they will not depart from it. Does Socialism enforce this duty? As

previously suggested, no one can escape the obligation that, at all times and in all things, we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

In reply to the request of His disciples, Christ taught them to pray, and under the title of the Lord's Prayer, it is being offered throughout the world. We are to seek first and to value as of first importance that God's name is to be hallowed and that His kingdom may come, and the next wonderful petition is: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Can any system of teaching successfully regulate the affairs of the world that ignores this standard of faith and life which Christ here gives?

Finally, with the candor which has been invited, I would say that I do not believe the system is democratic, which I understand to be its claim, but that, on the other hand, it is a complete despotism, destroying individual manhood and womanhood, and that it will be followed by a great revolutionary movement if the experiment is fully carried out. I believe it will result in assigning to every man, and perhaps woman, what should be his or her form of activity or means of making a living.

Yonkers, N. Y., August 27, 1915.

Extracts from National Socialistic Platform, Adopted at Chicago Convention in 1912

Working Program

As measures calculated to strengthen the working class in its fight for the realization of its ultimate aim, the co-operative commonwealth, and to increase its power of resistance against capitalist oppression, we advocate and pledge ourselves and our elected officers to the following program:

Collective Ownership

1. The collective ownership and democratic management of railroads, wire and wireless telegraphs and telephones, express services, steamboat lines, and all other social means of transportation and communication, and of all large-scale industries.

2. The immediate acquirement by the municipalities, the states, or the federal government of all grain elevators, stock yards, storage warehouses, and other distributing agencies, in order to reduce the present extortionate cost of living.

3. The extension of the public domain to include mines, quarries, oil wells, forests and water power.

4. The collective ownership of land wherever practicable, and in cases where such ownership is impracticable, the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation or exploitation.

5. The collective ownership and democratic management of the banking and currency system.

Political Demands

1. The absolute freedom of press, speech and assemblage.

2. The adoption of a graduated income tax, the increase of the rates of the present corporation tax, and the extension of inheritance taxes, graduated in proportion to the value of the estate and to nearness of kin—the proceeds of these taxes to be employed in the socialization of industry.

3. The abolition of the monopoly ownership of patents and the substitution of collective ownership, with direct rewards to inventors by premiums or royalties.

4. Unrestricted and equal suffrage for men and women.

5. The abolition of the Senate and of the veto power of the President.

6. The election of the President and the Vice-President by direct vote of the people.

7. The abolition of the power usurped by the Supreme Court of the United States to pass upon the constitutionality of the legislation enacted by Congress. National laws to be repealed only by act of Congress, or by a referendum vote of the whole people.

8. The abolition of the present restrictions upon the amendment of the constitution, so that instrument may be made amendable by a majority of the voters in a majority of the states.

9. Abolition of all federal district courts and the United States circuit courts of appeals. State courts to have jurisdiction in all cases arising between citizens of the several states and foreign corporations. The election of all judges for short terms.

10. The immediate curbing of the power of the courts to issue injunctions.

11. The free administration of the law.

12. The calling of a convention for the revision of the constitution of the United States.

Such measures of relief as we may be able to force from capitalism are but a preparation of the workers to seize the whole powers of government, in order that they may thereby lay hold of the whole system of socialized industry and thus come to their rightful inheritance.

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